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ABSTRACT

This paper, translated from French, is a transcript of a roundtable discussion on workplace literacy programs in Canada (especially in Quebec). During the roundtable, the panelists discussed various workplace literacy programs being conducted in their companies through joint partnerships of employers and unions, sometimes with government financial assistance or with community-based agencies. All the panelists agreed that workplace literacy programs are beneficial to the workers, who gain confidence and job potential; to the companies, who gain more loyal, satisfied, and flexible workers; and to the unions, who gain more loyal and active members. The panelists suggested that government paperwork to receive literacy grants be simplified and that literacy programs be expanded to more companies. (KC)

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L'alphabétisation en milieu de travail

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English translation

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Colloque national

L'alphabétisation des adultes : questions et options

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ROUND TABLE;

LITERACY TRAINING IN THE WORK PLACE

INTRODUCTION : LEARNERS' TESTIMONIALS

* Can you imagine being my age, and not being able to read or write, what are you going to do ?

- Hey, things are working out for you! You've got a job!

- Yeah, things are working out, but it's not the same. I always give examples like, at work, I can never get any higher. I'd like to be a foreman on my job because the work is more interesting than just being stuck there standing, and watching the machine go around, then washing the knife...

* I had trouble because, at school, I had always been in classes...they were called classes for slow learners at that time. So when I found myself in the work market, all I could do was be a waitress in a restaurant or a dish washer ... jobs like that.

* I want to learn to write, because it's a must! In the trade I'm in at present, I have to learn how. Because there are lots of thing that are obstacles. So I have to ask my wife to help me ...she helps me a lot with this. And then it's her a little also who - I've being going to the centre for two years now - she was the one who encouraged me to go. Because, you know, I have to learn how, otherwise I won't get anywhere.

* I'd really like to be a secretary. This has been my dream since I was a little girl. I have yet to finish my literacy training this year, then next year go to high school where I'll take business and commerce courses which will lead to a Grade 12 diploma and a diploma of secretarial studies ...after that, I'll be able to go out into the work market.

* I take the course at the factory, yes. I work from eight to four then my course runs from six o'clock to nine, nine thirty, ten o'clock. I take the four to midnight shift, then from midnight to eight. That one's really difficult.

Jean Fugère : Hello. I'm Jean Fugère. The subject of today's round table is literacy training in the work place. This is an issue that was little talked about barely a year ago, but which today has become a priority issue as regards literacy training in the 1990s.

In Quebec, the three big union headquarters and union federations have only just started setting up the first projects. In Ontario, pilot projects are at present being run in two factories, and three others are in the preparation stages. In New Brunswick, a program has been in operation for a year now. Otherwise, elsewhere, there is nothing.

All literacy training in the work place obviously involves a concerted effort on the part of the employees, employers,

unions and government-funded literacy groups. What kind of agreements are required to meet their respective needs ?

Well, this is what we are going to try to discover today in the company of our guests.

First, I'd like to introduce Diane Dugas, Director of the Prescott-Russell Literacy Centre.

Diane Dugas : Hello.

Jean Fugère : Next, Louise Miller, coordinator of literacy training at the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec.

Louise Miller : Hello.

Jean Fugère : Lisette Lapointe, Coordinator of Portes ouvertes, a literacy centre in Wawa.

Lisette Lapointe : Hello.

Jean Fugère : And finally, Armand Savoie, Director of Personnel at Fraser Incorporated in Kedgwick, New Brunswick.

Armand Savoie : Hello.

Jean Fugère : So we have said, then, that literacy training in the work place is a rather recent phenomenon. Diane, how did this

get started where you are ? You are one of the only two plants with a literacy program in Ontario.

Diane Dugas : Things got started in our plant last year. We started by carrying out a community study in the region, in the County of Prescott, on illiteracy. And then we took the opportunity to visit about a dozen industries to sound out their interest in literacy training in the work place. We selected one industry that seemed to be particularly interested. We chose it because it had 560 employees and therefore a good chance of making several groups, and then it also made it easier to provide training within the industry.

Jean Fugère : Was the employer immediately in agreement with your project ?

Diane Dugas : Yes. I'd say there was not much resistance. There had already been an attempt to run the Best Program, which is done through the union, but it didn't work out very well. And then the company right away was prepared to work with a community literacy group. They preferred that it came from outside. So we started ...we started last February, and now we have six learners. It's going extremely well, they are very, very motivated and ...

Jean Fugère : How do things work ? Is the training conducted during work hours or after work hours ?

Diane Dugas : Well, we managed to negotiate with the employer, and the employer is paying half of the workers' time. So, out of six hours of literacy training, there are three hours they do on their working time, they are paid the same rate, and then three hours which they do on their own free time.

Jean Fugère : How does this work, Diane, from the point of view of the literacy facilitators ? Is there only one ?

Diane Dugas : There is only one literacy facilitator. There is only one group, so what happens is that the facilitators ...this was decided with the workers : we held a training evening and then those workers interested in acquiring literacy skills were present and we settled on the two days with them. What we also did was set up a committee called IVACAP, because it's the company IVACO plus the CAP (community literacy committee), and which has two representatives from the employer, two union representatives, one learner and two individuals from the CAP.

So all together we decided to carry out a recruiting strategy, and to set schedules and then the content of the workshop and everything, and it was all decided on together.

Jean Fugère : Do you start from the actual needs of these workers, in the plant itself, in IVACO, when setting the program ?

Diane Dugas : Well, what we do is...we start from the need to become literate, that is, to acquire the basic concepts of French, but... finally, we use the method we were already using in the other groups because we are a *community* literacy group. So we use, as our base, the people's experience, that is, the material is put together as the sessions go along.

And so, we start with a wordbank which the learners ... the learners give us the words. We start from the sounds, and from them we build a wordbank and then exercises. We shore this up a little bit with the safety manual, the collective agreement. We do supplementary exercises at this level, but as a rule, everything is designed to facilitate learning how to write, using the learners' experience.

Jean Fugère : Are you going to assess your program after a certain period of time ? Do you ..have you objectives, and how are they drawn up ?

Diane Dugas : We are going to assess several things. For sure we will assess the concepts the learners will have learned at the end of the session. We are going to see how they have progressed. We will also evaluate the impact of our recruitment strategy. We will also assess how the foremen view this, with respect to the work shift, because sometimes it requires a replacement. Whether or not it will, finally, interfere with the rhythm of the plant, then finally we'll evaluate the satisfaction of all the parties taking part in the project.

Jean Fugère : Let's go on to another industry. This time, in Northern Ontario. Lisette, this is a program you set up in Dubreuilville. How did this project get started ?

Lisette Lapointe : Well, I had gone to Sudbury for an information day the Government was giving on literacy training in the work place. And when I got back home, I decided to contact the company in Dubreuilville. I met with the safety coordinator and asked him if he thought that within the industry, there was a real need for literacy training. He said there was, and he immediately referred my idea to the director of personnel. He also approved the entire program for literacy training in the work place, ... he was certain that the need was there for the company's employees.

Jean Fugère : Now, Dubreuilville, where you went, is a community, in an English-speaking sea which is nevertheless Ontario, it is an almost exclusively French-speaking community.

Lisette Lapointe : Yes, the population of Dubreuilville is 96% to 98% French-speaking.

Jean Fugère : So how did the project develop ? What point are you at now ?

Lisette Lapointe : Well, at present we are at the workshop stage, then... Well, we have developed a good part of the learning materials that are directly related to the workplace.

Jean Fugère : How many people are taking part in the workshops ?

Lisette Lapointe : At present we have ten learners enrolled.

Jean Fugère : Does the employer contribute his share towards this training ?

Lisette Lapointe : Towards the financing, yes. He contributes, say, we get the premises free, we are allowed to use their photocopying machine and their paper. We get the telephone provided free of charge ... we have everything, with regard to basic costs, provided by the company.

Jean Fugère : But it doesn't go as far as to pay, like in other projects, for example, where certain working hours that are considered as training hours.

Lisette Lapointe : No, I don't think so, I wouldn't think so.

Jean Fugère : Did you ask the employer to do this ?

Lisette Lapointe : Yes, but they refused outright.

Jean Fugère : Why ?

Lisette Lapointe : Because ... they don't see why it should be the company that has to take charge of literacy training in the work place, to be responsible for the costs of literacy training. They prefer the Government to do it ...they also prefer...they want to continue as is. They say the present model is working very well and is successful and they don't see why they should get more involved.

Jean Fugère : What is the biggest difficulty you have in setting up this program ?

Lisette Lapointe : For me, it's really getting the company involved, say, the company directors and the people in the work place ... it's a small town and everyone knows each other and they want to stay out of it, because they don't want to discriminate,

something like that, against the employees ...they want to continue having literacy training done discretely, as is currently the case.
They approve of this! They say that it's certainly a very good project which should have been set up earlier, years earlier, but the real involvement isn't there.

Jean Fugère : We're going to leave eastern and northern Ontario now to go, this time, to New Brunswick, to the town of Kedgwick. Armand Savoie, you are Director of Personnel at Fraser Incorporated. How did you come to set up literacy training in your company ?

Armand Savoie : When I came there, when I started working for Fraser Incorp., I noticed that the company was sending people to take electrician or industrial mechanic courses, and then these people would have problems because they didn't have the basic training. What I did ... I talked with small groups of employees. I sounded out the territory. Then I talked to large groups of employees, then we decided to start a pilot project.

So we started with fifteen participants. The project was evaluated, then after

that ...the pilot project was conducted outside the plant, but after the evaluation, it was resumed inside the plant. Right now we have about 30 participants. And then we invited the employees' spouses to join.

Jean Fugère : Now that is really a new initiative! Was management immediately enthusiastic about this ? Were they in agreement with that project ?

Armand Savoie : There was some resistance at first, but after talking about it, and sending memos, sending information, management came out in favour of starting the project.

Jean Fugère : You were directly involved as Director of Personnel. What arguments did you use to convince them ...to convince your colleagues ?

Armand Savoie : Well, the arguments I used were ..I found it cost the company a lot of money to send people for training if those people weren't already prepared. There was that argument. And then...at the production level : a happier employee is going to be more productive. At the level of health and safety, well, different arguments.

Jean Fugère : Let's talk a bit about the reception of the ...well, the cooperation from the employees, the union, all that. Who pays the costs of your program ?

Armand Savoie : The costs are paid in part by the employer and then by the Government of New Brunswick, then the employee also pays a certain amount. The employee pays $30, then if he doesn't miss too many classes, he gets back $15 at the end. Then once the course is over, we try to organize some activity to recognize the employees, and they are invited, with the members of the union and management, to a dinner.

Jean Fugère : You seem very well organized. There are lots of things in your system. Where did you get your inspiration ? Did it come from talking about it or did you look elsewhere ?

Armand Savoie : We looked about a bit. Then, with the help of the committee ... the joint committee meets once a month. Then, like the example of the spouses, no-one thought of that idea. It was simply the wife of an employee...she told us she would be interested in taking part in this program. So we put it to the monthly meeting, and it was accepted.

Jean Fugère : Louise Miller, we have just gone over three projects that were set up very very concretely in the workplace. You are responsible for literacy at the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec. You also have had a chance to witness some experiments internationally. What is your union doing to develop a very clear policy in this area ?

Louise Miller : Our union headquarters are working on this directly, basically along three main lines. First, to promote the development of literacy-in-the-work place programs, linked with vocational training, but also on an autonomous basis. But there are two that are also very important. It's the entire question of respecting the rights of the workers, that we want to ensure within the various policies and program development. There is a third focus which is also very important. This is the entire question of union life, to ensure that, basically, our members are in a position to take part in union life even if they have trouble reading and writing.

Jean Fugère : Let's talk about these last two focusses. When you talk about the rights of the workers, what exactly do you mean ?

Louise Miller : Well, in some collective agreements that have been negotiated, very often without meaning to, without there being any ill will, there were clauses included that could be discriminatory for illiterate individuals.

Let me give you an example. If grade 12 or equivalent is required for obtaining a manual job where there is never any need to read or write, we consider this clause discriminatory. So there are examples like this where, as a union, we have to give it some thought in order to ensure that ultimately our members really do have access to the different jobs in their company, but as well to facilitate the unemployed's access to jobs.

Jean Fugère : And the last point was ...

Louise Miller : At the level of union life, have you ever read a collective agreement ?

Jean Fugère : With difficulty...

Louise Miller : So you see! Well ...we have met a lot of people in our practice, in our practice sessions, but also through union courses, in health and safety, in vocational training programs, and we realize there are lots of workers who have trouble reading and writing. They also have

trouble reading the tract of the general assembly notice. When information is sent out on an 8½ x 14, with the text very concentrated, this is obviously going to exclude some people!

Jean Fugère : We have just heard about three different projects, three different approaches, which have a different make-up in each case. Does your Fédération want, at some point, to have a kind of standard model that could be applied to all the companies ?

Louise Miller : Certainly not! I think that if we want to get the whole issue of literacy training in the country going, we have to move in every direction. We have to choose different training locations, the work place being one of them. And we also have to find different teaching approaches in order to promote access to literacy programs and also to discover, to experiment with completely new methods.

In any case, in literacy training, what we have been able to note, not just here in Quebec, but in Canada, and even worldwide, is that there is no miracle method. So, each group learns differently. What is important is to have facilitators, trainers who are able to adapt themselves to the needs of their participants.

Jean Fugère : But that is an entirely different manner, the training of facilitators. At the moment, are you going to plan something for the trainers, for the literacy facilitators ?

Louise Miller : This is one of our big questions at the moment. Is the FTQ, as such, going to conduct training directly ? And this is a question that has nevertheless been asked for quite a while. But I could say that the preferred direction, at least over the next few months, is to work with organizations that already have some expertise in literacy training, that have been doing literacy training, in some cases, for ten years - whether they be community groups or school commissions - to work in collaboration with them to develop programs in the work place.

I'm going to give you an example of cooperation. This is a first pilot project we have at the union headquarters' level. It's with the blue collar workers of the city of Montreal. The city of Montreal - and this is important - decided, as part of International Year, to play a political role in this issue. They asked the Montreal School Commission to evaluate the needs of the workers with the purpose of offering literacy programs. This was done quite quickly, but the city realized that the needs were there.

Then, they asked to meet with the union to put forward a project for literacy training in the work place. We went to the city, where we were presented with the project which responded, from the workers' point of view, to the needs of the workers. And the union, basically, negotiated with the city the conditions that were more acceptable in order to meet both the needs of the city and the needs of the workers. So we signed a letter of agreement, and the union for its part agreed to do the work of promoting and making people aware of the project.

Why did we agree to this ? Because we realized that after six weeks of intervention on the part of the city and the school commission, only *six* workers had been recruited. So what we did ...we held a meeting of all the union delegates, and the social delegates and we talked about the entire question. We showed a video, and put forward all the stakes involved, and all the advantages of the program that had been negotiated and we asked them to promote it at the grassroots level.

A week later, we had 60 workers who had put in their names. Why ? Because the union had become directly involved, for one thing, but also mainly because there

had been an agreement negotiated with the city, which was very straightforward, which didn't penalize the workers at all. We had also managed to work out, and this was very easy, although we're not boasting about it, that the program be conducted during working hours, at the employer's expense. So the city lets the workers go, during working hours, to take literacy training.

Jean Fugère : You put your finger, in a way, on the whole problem of recruiting which is one of the major problems of literacy training, since statistics tell us - finally, according to the Southam study - less than 2% of illiterate adults take literacy courses and less than 10% - less than 1 out of 10 about - agree to take them. These statistics are quite striking when you see them ... So, your union is prepared to carry out an awareness campaign. Are there other ways ? What can be done to recruit people ?

Diane Dugas : We also had a problem of recruitment. It was really thanks to the involvement of the union representatives who knew their workers, then each department head also, in the plan, knew the workers who were having troubles, and they approached them personally. But once the nucleus has been created, the nucleus ...then it goes

well, because it is mainly the learners who, by word of mouth, go out and find others : they will tell their brother-in-law, their cousin, and finally, the ball gets rolling. And the nucleus grows and we can set up several groups.

Jean Fugère : So finally it is a matter of finding a nucleus of learners and to take off from there ...Is this an experience that has been repeated in your ..your companies, does it work like this too ?

Armand Savoie : At first, in my plant, it was difficult, but how it works now, it's the learners who find ...who do the recruiting. But sometimes, there are a few cases that have been referred to us by foremen. We had three cases like this.

Jean Fugère : Okay. You wanted to add something.

Louise Miller : Yes. Well I was going to say that I am simply astounded by these data, and it can't be easy to recruit. As long as society isn't wide open to this issue, as long as there isn't any literacy policy, as long as it isn't as normal to register for literacy training as it is for university, we are going to have trouble recruiting people... because there is so much stigma attached to the problem of illiteracy, shame on the part of the people with the problem ...but above all,

prejudices against those who have no such skills, so that as long as we are unable to put an end to this situation, we will not be successful in reaching the illiterates !

Jean Fugère : Because this category of people is completely relegated to the fringes.

Diane Dugas : At home, in our factory, when we talked about the recruitment strategy, they didn't even want to use the word "literacy" because they said the workers would be ashamed and wouldn't want to come. It would be better to talk of professional development. Well, we refused - we refused to play this game. We said why cover things up, why make up things ? Let's be direct even if it means starting with fewer people. But at least when they come, they'll know exactly what to expect. Because at that time, we may possibly have attracted other workers with not such a need for this kind of training.

And then there was a great deal of skepticism ... within the committee, that it wouldn't work. But we went ahead with it and it worked. And now everybody in this factory is talking about literacy training.

Jean Fugère : The other problem is to make the employers also aware. We should say a few words about this because they are the ones who decide in the end. And there is one statistic I'd like to give to you. We're told it comes from the Canadian companies' Task Force on literacy that estimates the direct cost of illiteracy for the companies at 4.15 billion dollars. This argument carries weight as we often have the impression that literacy training is not profitable, but right now, this phenomenon of illiteracy is costing companies 4.15 billion dollars.

And this is measured in the cost of workers compensation, excessive supervision, loss of productivity, widespread trend toward absenteeism, a lack of motivated employees, etc. Is that true ? Is it true that illiteracy can be costly for a company ? You're probably the best people to discuss this. You work directly ...

Armand Savoie : In my view, I think it's costly for industry! And for the employees, I think it might be worthwhile to ... for the employers, it would be worthwhile for them to develop literacy programs. But you won't see ... the employer won't see any short-term results. It's in the long-term that you're going to see results.

Jean Fugère : Do you feel that employers are sufficiently aware ?

Armand Savoie : No. I think we've missed the boat with the International Literacy Year. We haven't given much thought to literacy training in the workplace.

Diane Dugas : I think we have to be careful ... Louise might like to discuss this a bit later. I think she has examined this study a bit more carefully. But the first thing that comes to mind, for me, in this regard, is that you have to also examine the industry itself, how it works. When we talk, for example, of worker's compensation, there are accidents on the job that are not caused only by illiteracy, but there are accidents that happen on the job because productivity is accelerated too much within the factory, because the work shifts are too long, and then there is a loss of concentration at the end of the shift.

All of these things, in the end, can affect safety in the workplace and have nothing to do with illiteracy. I would be curious to know how the proportions are viewed and how this study was carried out, if it is indeed scientifically based in relation to this.

Jean Fugère : Do you get the impression that, in the end, we are attributing a lot of things to illiteracy that have nothing to do with it ?

Diane Dugas : We have to be cautious and we have to qualify the data we have. Louise has given this closer study.

Jean Fugère : Yes. Go on.

Louise Miller : Well, let's just say ... I, for one, have always been uncomfortable with the Task Force's report. First, because it's an estimate and we are making assertions based on it, on the one hand. And because there are ... deep down there is really no scientific value. There have never been any detailed studies conducted in this area, in terms of accidents on-the-job, as Diane mentioned. What is not said in the inquiry is that the illiterates are mostly found in the job sectors that have a high risk of accidents on-the-job.

So it's only natural that more of those involved in such accidents should be illiterates if they are to be found in the more dangerous sectors, first question.

With regard to loss of productivity, I'm always amazed when I see this, because ... every time I have had to meet with companies or workers on this question, the companies were far from being aware and realizing the problem when a worker would tell them that he was refusing a promotion because he had difficulty reading or writing. And very often the employer would say : "I can't understand it, he's my best worker!" Because obviously a worker who is experiencing difficulty reading and writing, will often be far superior in the performance of other tasks, but clearly superior in order specifically to avoid being seen as illiterate. So he's going to be extremely productive. He will be extremely well integrated. He is going to be offered positions, and promotions as a foreman, which he will end up being refused because he has problems with reading and writing.

And I would like to add one last word to all of this ... The use, deep down, of research such as this ... In the end we can read information like that and say, yes, it's important to have literacy programs in the workplace. We can also read this information and tell ourselves, yes, it's important for me to get rid of my illiterate worker, and not hire any.

And that is extremely dangerous. When we spoke, a moment ago, of recruitment and awareness problems, statements like that, you can be sure that in a company that uses such data, no worker is going to come forward and say : "I'm having problems with reading and writing."

So it's really a two-edged sword. I don't think it's been done in this sense, but I look at the reactions, among others, in the small and medium-size businesses that don't have the means to develop training programs. They are basically given the message to avoid illiterate workers. And that's very, very dangerous.

Jean Fugère : This also raises a whole new question. It's an argument, I think, which employers use when it comes time to pay the bill, that is ... no, they don't want to give, I don't see why I should pay for the basic education and training of people who come to me out of the school system and who have, in the end, not received the education they should have from the school system! Why should I pay if, in the end, it's the school system that's at fault for not having done its job.

Diane Dugas : I think here we have to ... it's not only the employer's responsibility. There's the Government, and the unions. I think we have to set up a partnership where everyone gets involved so that literacy in the workplace, in fact, is conducted as intelligently as possible and that, in the end, it also takes everyone's needs into account. Because everyone benefits! The worker himself will get something out of it that will allow him to transfer these acquired skills to other activities, whether inside or outside the work place or at home.

Everyone has something to gain, so it's a question of getting together and seeing how the partnership will develop between each partner so that society in fact becomes more functional.

Jean Fugère : This, moreover, is the big key word. The word "partnership" between the different bodies. How do you see this partnership, specifically ? We can perhaps start with Louise and then Armand.

Louise Miller : It is essential, because the problem of illiteracy is a social problem and should involve the whole community. So we have to get the different partners together and sit them at the same table so they can together find answers to the needs of the company, but also to the needs of the workers.

And the reason I am insisting on this is that I have seen proposals for literacy programs which were carried out in some companies in Quebec, which were more what I would call selective programs. That is to say, a 60-hour literacy training program is given to make the worker capable of using the latest technology. In our view this is not literacy training.

It's important to really see the question as a whole, from the point of view of the overall needs, in terms of the company, the worker and society.

Diane Dugas : Exactly, what Louise is saying is that if we succeed in involving everyone in the decision-making, then, everyone will have something to gain, in the end, and it won't just be the employer who will ...

Jean Fugère : One-way, right. It won't be only the decision of ... Do you see what I mean ? Can you see, based on your respective experiences, that such a partnership is possible and that it's heading in the right direction now ?

Diane Dugas : I would say that, at the factory, at home, it works because ... I think what the union gets is a ... it gets a worker who is more aware, more militant, who can

read his collective agreement, and then work at improving his working conditions. And what the employer gets is a more functional worker, who is more flexible and can adapt better to the new technology. It's the same thing for the learner who first gains more assurance, more self-confidence something he previously lacked and which enables him to transfer his skills. For me ... in my company, in any case, that's what's happening. I can see it!

Lisette Lapointe : I can also see it. Let's just say that it certainly is true that the learner gains even more self-confidence. If he goes to work ... if he goes to work and then shows ... he sees himself as having greater value, let's say, he has more interest then ... Like one of them was telling me : "Now, I'm hot; I want ... I really want to." And he wants to go to his welding class, and all that. He is interested. And he says, now I'm working, and I like it. You can see the interest he has now which he didn't have a year earlier.

Jean Fugère : Armand.

Armand Savoie : I'm all for the partnership system, and it's good to have the unions get involved, the employers get involved and the Governments. And I think the Governments should ... as for their forms

which have to be completed to try to get funding and all that, their approaches, I think all this should be simplified a bit more. It scares the employers. Because when you think of the time you spend just to get perhaps $5000, sometimes, you wonder if it's worth all the trouble.

Jean Fugère : Too much paperwork.

Armand Savoie : Yes.

Jean Fugère : Louise, do you have anything to say about this partnership idea ?

Louise Miller : Well ... as it's been stated, in effect, there is increasingly more development on the local level, in the factory, in the municipality, but the basic problem remains the same : there is no political will. I, for one, think we need political leadership at the partnership level. We continue to increase coalitions on all sorts of subjects throughout the country. It might now be time for us to stop and set one up on literacy to involve all the social partners. Whether it be the workplace, the union/employer, the community groups, public institutions ... there is a very great need for action on a much wider scale than simple local action.

Jean Fugère : In closing, if we think in global terms regarding this matter of literacy in the workplace, if you had, from your experience, the possibility of changing something and as quickly as possible, what would you like to see ... what changes would you look for ?

Louise Miller : In terms of the workers' needs as such, and also at the level of the company's needs, deep down, what I would like, is to have the country recognize the whole principle of continuing education, on-going training, literacy being a part of this whole training process. But that it be recognized, that it be developed, that it be funded as is the case in several countries in Europe.

And directly related to this whole issue of on-going continuing education, I think it might now be the time to bring to Canada this whole idea of educational leave, which could be an extremely interesting way of training workers in literacy skills.

Jean Fugère : Could you elaborate on this last point ?

Louise Miller : Educational leave, that is, give the workers long-term leave to enable them to seek trainning without losing out at the level of their working conditions, or wage conditions. This applies for

professional development programs. It also applied in certain areas to release people to go and pursue university studies. Why not also apply it in the case of people with less schooling ?

Jean Fugère : Armand ?

Armand Savoie : I have two comments to make. First, it would make for a better sharing of resources between the provinces : that would be helpful. And also financial assistance from our governments.

Jean Fugère : Lisette.

Lisette Lapointe : Well, in my case, it's a better partnership between the interested groups, and the recognition perhaps that these literacy centres are specialized to, say, give at least basic literacy training. I'm not talking here of more advanced training, but basic literacy for adults in the workplace, as in society in general.

Jean Fugère : And finally Diane.

Diane Dugas : Well, I would join with Lisette. We're both with community literacy groups with very, very little means at their disposal. I think we have developed expertise in our approach with the illiterates. How to make them feel comfortable, how to make them finally use

what they already know to learn and then be able to transfer these skills to other ways of developing, and finally, anything that could come up for them.

And ... well it would be my wish that the Government and all the partners, finally, be able to come to the literacy centres to address that problem. And then that the literacy centres have the means, that they don't have to beg any more from the school commissions or the various subsidized agencies, finally, so they can perform their work adequately.

Jean Fugère : Well there you have it. There are the comments, there are the suggestions, there are the testimonials which, I'm quite sure, will provide you with topics for the next up-coming discussion. Thank you to our guests and thank you for being here.

THE END